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Identical letters dated 17 September 2014 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

Ebola virus disease in West Africa is dramatically worsening, with rapidly spreading infections in the three most affected countries and risks of contagion to neighbouring countries and beyond. To date, the World Health Organization (WHO) has reported nearly 5,000 cases, resulting in over 2,500 deaths. Owing to difficulties in monitoring and reporting, the total number of both cases and deaths is likely to be much higher. International experts assess that Ebola is spreading at an exponential rate, with the number of cases now doubling approximately every three weeks. It is clear that the Ebola crisis is no longer just a public health crisis, but has become multidimensional, with significant political, social, economic, humanitarian, logistical and security dimensions.

It is imperative that we mobilize efforts and resources at the international, regional and national levels, and equally important to ensure that such efforts and resources are deployed and delivered to ensure maximum impact in the places where they are most needed, in the shortest possible time frame. The recent upsurge in the response effort is welcome, but we must do more, and we must do it faster. The Governments of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone are determined to respond effectively, but they have, as expressed in their respective letters, asked for and are depending on our assistance and support.

I am determined that the United Nations, in support of national efforts, will do everything it can to bring an end to this crisis and will provide the strategic leadership, diverse capacity and operational framework for the action necessary to harness international efforts in a unified and coherent manner in order to manage the crisis effectively and efficiently. To that end, I will rely on the technical capabilities and expertise of WHO and draw on the resources of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, as well as on the relevant competencies and capabilities of our United Nations agencies, funds and programmes and the United

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Nations country teams. We recognize and appreciate the contributions already committed by Member States and look forward to collaborating and coordinating with other Member States. I will look to Member States and other international partners to honour their pledges, provide much-needed additional support and sustain their commitment for as long as is needed.

Initially, on 12 August 2014, I appointed Dr. David Nabarro as the United Nations System Senior Coordinator for Ebola Virus Disease to provide overall strategic direction and to assist Governments in the region in addressing the crisis. Subsequently, on 8 September 2014, I activated the Organization's emergency response mechanism and named Anthony Banbury as Deputy Ebola Coordinator and Emergency Crisis Manager. In recognition of the rapidly evolving situation on the ground, including the rapid spread of Ebola virus disease, and following consultations with Dr. Margaret Chan and Dr. Nabarro, I have decided to establish a United Nations Mission. The Mission will harness the capabilities and competencies of all the relevant United Nations actors under a unified operational structure to reinforce unity of purpose, effective ground-level leadership and operational direction, in order to ensure a rapid, effective, efficient and coherent response to the crisis. The singular strategic objective and purpose of the Mission will be to work with others to stop the Ebola outbreak. To achieve this, the strategic priorities of the Mission will be to stop the spread of the disease, treat the infected, ensure essential services, preserve stability and prevent the spread to countries currently unaffected.

The Mission, through presences within the affected States, will provide needed field-level support to the Governments and peoples of West Africa as they respond to the crisis. The Mission will assist Member States and regional and sub-regional organizations, upon request, as well as other partners, including non-governmental organizations, in delivering their bilateral and multilateral assistance in a coordinated and coherent manner on the ground. In particular, the Mission will coordinate with the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States and the Mano River Union.

Under the joint initiative of the Director-General of WHO and myself, Dr. Nabarro will continue to represent the United Nations system and provide overarching strategic leadership, coordination and guidance, including through consultations with the Member States and other stakeholders participating in or contributing to the international efforts in response to Ebola virus disease. He will lead international efforts to mobilize and sustain the political will and strategic resources necessary to combat this crisis. I invite all Member States, other intergovernmental organizations, civil society and the private sector to join a broad international coalition at the earliest opportunity and to contribute decisively to the international response to the disease.

At the operational level, I intend to immediately establish a United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER), to be headed by a Special Representative of the Secretary-General (Under-Secretary-General) whom I shall appoint following consultation with Dr. Chan and who will report directly to me. The Mission will build and maintain a regional operational platform, ensuring the rapid delivery of international assistance against the needs identified in the affected States, lead the response at the operational level and provide strategic direction to the United Nations system and other implementing partners on the ground. It will also work closely with all Governments and partners contributing to this effort.

The Mission will have its headquarters in the region, but not in one of the three most affected countries. The Mission will have country offices in each of the three most intensely affected countries, led by a United Nations Ebola Crisis Manager. The Mission leadership will include a senior health official nominated by WHO. It is essential to assess continuously all capabilities for the monitoring and surveillance of the disease in those countries establishing a prevention response. The Mission will work closely and in a coordinated manner with existing United Nations presences and, in particular, with the affected countries and the Governments of countries deemed to be most at risk of Ebola outbreaks. If necessary, the Mission will be able to adjust its presence and activities in a manner commensurate with the needs and demands of the Ebola emergency response, including through the operational deployment to other countries that experience high levels of Ebola transmission, at the request of the Governments concerned. The Mission shall remain mindful of the potential peace and security implications, cognizant of the fact that all three affected countries are presently within the ambit of the Peacebuilding Commission.

The Mission's country offices will rely on, and work in close partnership with, the United Nations country teams and other United Nations presences in the countries concerned and in the region at large, including in particular the United Nations Mission in Liberia. I have consulted with the heads of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, and we have all agreed on the importance of ensuring unity of effort for all the organizations' Ebola work in West Africa under the Mission's leadership. The Mission will bring together the range of United Nations actors and capabilities, as well as Governments, Member States, non-governmental organizations and other relevant stakeholders, in order to provide effective leadership, avoid unnecessary duplication and ensure the efficient prioritization of available assets and resources. The Mission will work closely with the national Ebola operational centres established by the Governments concerned, as well as with contributing Member States that are providing assistance within affected countries. The Mission will also engage closely with the private sector in order to ensure that the collective international community is drawing upon all possible assets to overcome the outbreak and its destructive secondary effects.

The Mission will be guided by six principles:

1. Reinforce government leadership;
2. Deliver rapid impact on the ground;
3. Closely coordinate and collaborate with actors outside the United Nations;
4. Tailor responses to particular needs in the different countries;
5. Reaffirm WHO lead on all health issues;
6. Identify benchmarks for transition post-emergency and ensure that actions strengthen systems.

Furthermore, the Mission will be responsible for catalysing a rapid and massive mobilization of international human, material, logistic and financial resources, under a single overarching framework, in pursuit of the objectives of the mandate and strategic priorities cited above. To achieve those strategic objectives, the Mission will focus on 12 mission-critical actions identified by the Senior United

Nations System Coordinator, following consultations with major stakeholders, including the Governments of the affected countries, including:

1. Identification and tracing of people with Ebola virus disease;
2. Care for the infected and infection control;
3. Safe and dignified burial;
4. Medical care for responders;
5. Food security and nutrition;
6. Access to basic health services;
7. Cash incentives for health workers;
8. Economic protection and recovery;
9. Supplies of material and equipment;
10. Transportation and fuel;
11. Social mobilization;
12. Messaging.

The Mission will also put in place, with guidance and oversight from WHO and assistance from Member States, a training infrastructure for medical and non-medical, international and national staff to ensure standardized competencies, with a priority attached to preventing Mission staff and associated responders from becoming infected with Ebola virus disease in the conduct of their duties. The protection of United Nations staff and all responders is a top priority for me and a fundamental tenet of halting the transmission of the disease. The Mission will identify key strategic supplies and assets on the basis of advice from WHO and others, and will establish a centralized procurement and distribution system, using the World Food Programme Humanitarian Response Depot in Accra as a logistics hub, and other locations as appropriate. The Mission will be responsible for collecting, analysing and presenting comprehensive information on the spread of Ebola virus disease and the international response to it, including critical gaps in activities or resources.

It is my intention that the Mission will exist only as long as is necessary to stem the crisis. When Ebola virus disease no longer poses a grave threat to the people of the infected countries, the Mission will have achieved its objective and will be disbanded. The Ebola situation has highlighted the need to determine if and how early identification systems need to be improved and how those systems can better translate into more timely action. I intend to consult with Dr. Chan on this issue in order to make recommendations to accelerate the global response in the future. Input from the affected Governments, Member States and other relevant stakeholders will be an essential part of this process.

The Mission, with strong support from WHO and other partners, will also work with the Governments of non-affected countries to ensure that appropriate preparedness and prevention measures are in place to avoid further spread. I call upon leaders around the world to take the steps necessary at the national level to ensure that every country is prepared to take rapid and appropriate action in the event that any cases of Ebola virus disease enter their countries.

I count on the support of the Security Council, the General Assembly and all Member States in this vital endeavour. A more detailed report outlining the required resource requirements will be submitted for the approval and consideration of the Assembly. I also intend to establish a trust fund to mobilize the necessary voluntary contributions and other resources to further this task and to assist in funding the broader effort, including by addressing any gaps in the activities of United Nations system partners.

I intend to make maximum use of the authority provided to me, including in the area of human resources, in order to promote the timely and effective response to the Ebola crisis.

No one country, no one organization has the resources to stem the tide of the Ebola crisis. Each Government is ultimately responsible for its own people. The Governments and the people of West Africa have asked for our help. We must come together as one United Nations, and we call upon Member States to join us in answering their call.

I would be grateful if you would bring the present letter urgently to the attention of the members of the General Assembly and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **BAN** Ki-moon